



Believe

The Apostles' Creed



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH ARLINGTON

PERSONAL JOURNAL

Believing is not always easy.

Why can it be so difficult to 'believe' at times? It is easy to believe in things we can touch and see. Thomas knew it was true that Jesus was alive and had risen from the dead when he could touch and see the scars from Jesus' crucifixion. He had no doubt. He believed.

John 20:24-29 tells us his story:

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Philip was not exempt from doubt either. In John 14, Jesus was preparing the disciples for his death and letting them know he was going to be with God. In verse 8, Philip says "Lord, show us God and that will be enough for us." Peter needed to **see** God.

We read Jesus' response in John 14:9-12:

"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen God. How can you say, 'Show us God'? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am God, and that God is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is God, living in me, who is doing the work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in God and God is in me; or at least believe in the evidence of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to be with God."

Philip walked with Jesus and knew him as well as anyone but he still needed to be challenged to believe.





There are two obstacles to our belief.

Doubt and fear keep us from believing.
It is difficult to believe in something we cannot see.

Trust and faith are the antidote to doubt and fear.
However, we can't see trust or faith either.

Doubt and Fear. Trust and Faith.

These emotions are often in conflict with each other in our lives.

There are no areas of our lives and our relationship with God where these emotions are in conflict more than in the area of giving.

We have fear and lack the trust in God that, if we increase our giving, we might not have enough to take care of the other areas of our lives.

We find ourselves doubting that God will provide even though the scriptures are clear we can have faith in God's promises to us.

How do we have the trust and faith to believe that God can help us overcome the doubts and fears?



Strengthening Our Faith

For thousands of years, theologians and scholars have created creeds, prayers and catechisms to help us with our doubts and fears. These prayers and rituals were created to help us affirm and confirm what we believe as Christians and to instill trust and faith in God.

The Apostles' Creed is one of the tools created to help us say what as Christians we all believe. The Apostles' Creed probably developed in second century Rome during a very tumultuous time for the church. During this time of external threats to Christianity and internal division, this unified creed was created for new converts to profess at baptism.

The creed is one of the most universally recognized summaries of the Christian faith. What we believe about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and salvation has a profound impact on how we walk through our daily lives.

If we truly believe the words of the Apostles' Creed, then we believe in the promises of the Bible. These promises offer hope and inspiration on how to resist the temptation to doubt and fear the unknown. The promises of the Bible that are affirmed in the Apostles' Creed offer a path toward trust and faith in God.



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

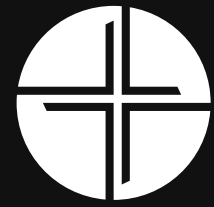
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;

the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty;

from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH ARLINGTON

At First Presbyterian Church Arlington, our mission is to transform life by glorifying God, following Jesus, and loving our neighbor.

We are able to achieve this mission through our Core Values:

Authentic Worship

- *We give genuine praise and glory to the Lord by gathering for worship and responding to God's Word.*

Missional Discipleship

- *We join God's mission to all people by making disciples through knowing and following Jesus.*

Relational Evangelism

- *We connect with people where they are and share our love for them and the good news of Jesus.*

Kingdom Focused

- *We seek first God's will so that lives are transformed and empowered by God's Spirit.*

Sacrificial Service

- *We serve the Lord and our neighbors in our communities and around the world.*



Reflection:

Do you believe in our God-inspired mission?

Will you help us fulfill God's call for our church?

The Believe campaign is centered on the biblical beliefs that shape The Apostles' Creed.

While the creed itself is not Scripture, the Scriptural beliefs contained within it have served to instruct believers and the Church since the second century. The creed is rooted in Jesus' Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

What we believe matters, and what we believe in is reflected in how we live our lives.



As Christians, our calling is to engage with the world in a way that reflects the incarnation.

God chose to send Jesus to model how to live in the world without being pulled into the culture. However, we are not Jesus... Living in the world can cause us to have doubts and fears that keep us from believing the truths Jesus died for.

In this season of discerning what the next step on your giving journey looks like, let's tap into the history of the saints who struggled with doubts just like us.

Through a deep dive into the Apostles' Creed, let's reaffirm what we *Believe*.

In this 4-week journey we will explore the fundamentals and foundations of the Apostles' Creed.

Week 1 - "Who do you say that I am?" The Apostles' Creed provides us the opportunity to say who we believe God is and to own the words for ourselves.

Week 2 - "God, the Father Almighty" - God is our Father. God is Almighty. God gives and provides like no other. Because of that, we can trust God fully. This church must go where God sends us.

Week 3 - "Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord" - He is the Son of God. He is the righteous Judge to come. He was the perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. All of these point to his divinity.

Week 4 - "The Holy Spirit" - The Holy Spirit remains unpredictable and untamed. God's Spirit, who inspired and instructed the prophets and writers of Scripture, is still at work today.





Week 1: October 29

Sermon Title: "Who do you say that I am?"

Sermon Summary Week 1:

"Let us say what we believe." That is a common introduction to our weekly Affirmation of Faith. Just as Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?", Christians of each generation are asked the same. The Apostles' Creed provides a framework for the Church to begin answering that question.

Sermon Text: Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Supporting Texts: Romans 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Ecclesiastes 4:12

Week 1 Study Questions

1. Why is it important for Christians to say what we believe?

2. What comfort or strength do you find in the Apostles' Creed?

3. Take a moment to really read and say the Apostles' Creed. Don't rush through it as quickly as possible. Pause on each phrase. Which one or two phrases struck you perhaps in a new or fresh way?


Families

Families sometimes have heirlooms passed down through generations. Maybe it is a family Bible. It could be special jewelry. Does your family have something like that? How is the Apostles' Creed like an heirloom passed down through generations of faith?

Can generosity impact legacy?

As you read and think about your personal generosity journey, ask yourself this question: *what drives my generosity?*

This is a daunting question for most of us, filled with layers reflecting our individual circumstances.



In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus explains why the widow's mite was such a precious gift. Others gave out of their abundance, gifts with no impact on their lifestyle; but the widow gave "out of her poverty... all she had."

Her legacy is that she gave with a heart full of generosity and love.

So how can we respond?

As you consider the amount to give, reflect on God's example as the first and most generous giver. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son..." (John 3:16) By following God's example, you give from your very best; you give sacrificially; you give in love.

Through this *Believe* initiative, you may begin to realize it has less to do with the size of one's gift and more to do with the spirit in which the gift is offered.

God is certainly the author of all things generous. God also chooses to teach us through the actions and words of others.

As you pray and consider your commitment, answer the questions on the following page and allow the answers to become a part of your thoughts and prayers.

Who is the most generous person you have ever known?

What made you choose this person?

What words would you use to describe this person?

How are you emulating the actions of this person?

How can you grow into living a more holistically generous life?



Week 2: November 5

Sermon Title: "God, the Father Almighty"

Sermon Summary Week 2:

It is an amazing thing that God is the almighty King and our heavenly Father. The same God who is powerful enough to create the universe out of nothing is the same God who loves us so much he sent his only Son to reconcile us. Our trust in his power and gracious love gives us the freedom to mirror his generosity.

Sermon Text: Genesis 1-2

Genesis 1:27-28, 31a

²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Supporting Texts: Psalm 19, John 3:16, Luke 15:11-32

Week 2 Study Questions

1. Read Genesis 1 and 2. Does our ever-growing knowledge of the expanses of the universe ever make you feel tiny? Maybe too tiny for God to notice?

2. What is a moment from your life when you were reminded of God's personal and intimate love for you?

3. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 often focuses on the sons' behaviors. What do we learn about God the Father almighty through the character of the father in the parable?

Families

If you had the power to create anything from nothing, what would you make and why? Does your answer possibly reflect the love in your heart?

Why Turn in an Commitment Card?

One of the goals for any initiative is 100% participation from every family in our church. We encourage every family to prayerfully consider completing a commitment card for this initiative.

There are spiritual and practical outcomes to completing a commitment card, too.

A commitment card:

- Requires a decision from us over delay; for us to take action over avoidance.
- Communicates the importance of personal growth in giving. Most important decisions in life are confirmed by written documents.
- Provides financial information that enables leaders to make wise decisions.
- The card, from day-one, represents the culmination of an important spiritual journey. The campaign is driving us all to the completion of the card.
- Allows a point of conversation and decision for an individual and couple.



There is power in a physical symbol. Individuals wear a wedding ring as a way of symbolizing commitment to their marriage. It doesn't make someone married. You could be married without it. But the physical symbol is important and it sends a message to those who see it.

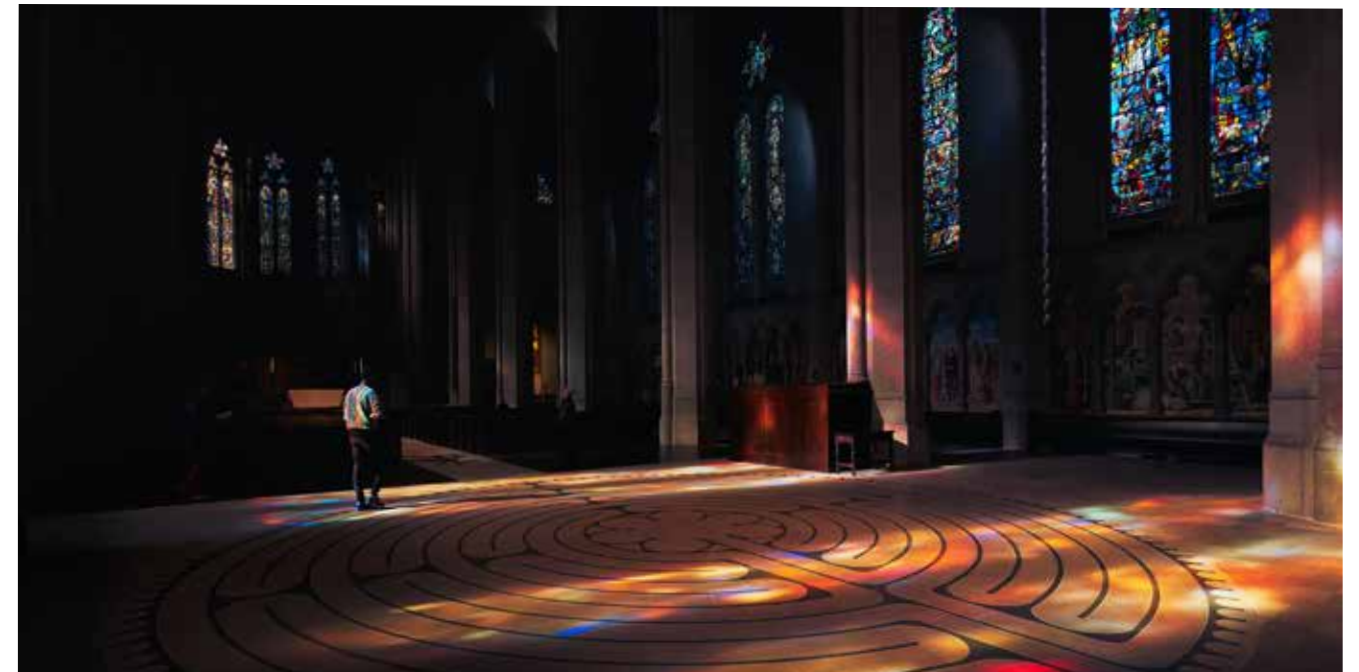
In an age when so many helpful but automatic giving options abound, it is tempting to put one's giving on autopilot. This can stall one's continuing growth and discipleship, and impact generosity. Completing a card allows for the automated giver to reassess their giving level.

This campaign is an opportunity for us to understand the "why" of commitment cards.

What if we all thought of a commitment card in terms of the spiritual check-up it could provide and to help us confirm what we truly Believe?

What if we saw commitment cards as an opportunity not to be missed to reassess our gratitude to God and that we Believe in God's promises?

What if we saw commitment cards as a sign of trust in God and that we Believe God will provide the resources for us to fulfill our commitment?



During worship on November 19, our FPCA family will have the opportunity to celebrate God's grace and generosity as we complete our commitment cards for 2024.

You will receive your card before Commitment Sunday. Below is an example of the estimate of giving card.



MY / OUR COMMITMENT

I/We will trust in the Lord with all our heart. I/We will honor the Lord with my first fruits. I/We estimate giving to the Lord's work/ministry through our church this year as follows:

2024 Annual Commitment \$ _____

I/We plan to fulfill this commitment:

Weekly Quarterly

Monthly Annually

Your information. Please print.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Signature _____

I understand this commitment may be revised or canceled at any time at my request.

2024 Estimate of Giving

Please contact me/us with information about:

Help with setting up online recurring gifts

Making a gift of appreciated assets or from an IRA

Giving through my/our Estate Planning (will, insurance beneficiary, etc.)

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Week 3: November 12

Sermon Title: "Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord"

Sermon Summary Week 3:

Jesus' incarnation is the most generous gift ever. His reconciling us to God the Father has brought us into his family through adoption. and we are no red-headed stepchildren (no offense!). We are fully God's children and heirs to his imperishable inheritance.

Sermon Text: Galatians 4:4-7

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Supporting Texts: Isaiah 43:1-7, John 1:1-14, Matthew 9:28

Week 3 Study Questions

1. Which phrase of this section of the Apostles' Creed is speaking to you most right now? Why?

2. Is there a phrase you are struggling with?

3. Which phrases emphasize his divinity and his humanity?

Families

Parents/Grandparents - What are the best parts of being a parent?

Children - What are the best part of being a child?

All - What are the best parts of being a child in God's family?

Take the Generosity Challenge

Self-reflection is a large ingredient when making changes in our lives. Most of us do not like change because it makes us uncomfortable.

Taking the next step in the giving journey will cause change. For anyone to give more money back to God something will have to change. We will eat out less, save less, transfer appreciated assets, liquidate 401k's or the like. Regardless of our situation, something will change.

Below are some questions for you to consider as it pertains to your beliefs, attitudes and actions surrounding generosity. Our desire is for everyone in our church to live a radically generous life. Asking and answering some of these questions could be a natural step for that change to begin.

What giving experience has caused me to become closer to God?

Am I giving in a way that still changes me, or has it become comfortable and routine?

Do I see money as a tool for God or a tool for me?

Do I make larger financial decisions such as a home purchase or a car purchase based on my desire to ensure I can still have a legacy of generosity?

How does my giving compare to other financial investments I make on a recurring basis? (cell phone bill, mortgage payment, gym membership, entertainment)

If I had an area where God is asking me to stop spending, it would be:

Have I shared my giving story with others? Could my story be an inspiration to help others on their journey? How might God use my strengths and my struggles in this area for His glory?



Week 4: November 19

Sermon Title: "The Holy Spirit"

Sermon Summary Week 4:

The Apostles' Creed unites Christians of many diverse walks into one catholic, or universal, faith. In a world of deepening divisions, having something that unites us is a wonderful gift from God. Commitment Sunday is a day this congregation will unite in faith and action. "I" becomes "we." We invite the Holy Spirit to spark our belief.

Sermon Text: Acts 3:1-10

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Supporting Texts: Romans 12:4-21

Week 4 Study Questions

1. The third section of the Apostles' Creed expresses various ways the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church today. Reading through each phrase, identify one way you have seen the Spirit work in your life, your church.

2. Is there a phrase you would like to see your faith strengthened? Write your prayer about that here.

3. Individuals within a congregation can believe many things. Why is it important for we to share certain core beliefs together?

Families

Family members often share physical characteristics - noses, height, ears etc. Do you notice similarities among any family members? Romans 12 describes us as the body of Christ. What similarities do Christians share through faith?

The Generosity Journey

There is much more to generosity than just a financial transaction. In God's eyes, our growth in generosity is less about a financial transaction and more about a transformation. It is truly a matter of the heart!

The Generosity Journey can help us think about this transformation. There are five steps within this journey, and while we are all in different places in the journey, we are invited to progress as we growth our faith.

Moving along the path requires a heart change; it brings us to a greater understanding of God, not a greater view of ourselves.

As you read below and think about this journey, ask yourself, "What is driving me to be generous?"



An Initial Giver is someone who decides to give for the first time, out of a response to God's Word about giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7-15)



A Consistent Giver is someone who decides to give something and to give it on a consistent basis to exercise the discipline of giving on a regular basis. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)



An Intentional Giver is someone who is beginning to think about their giving in relation to other things on which they spend their money. (Luke 14:28-35)



A Sacrificial Giver is someone who recognizes the cost that Christ paid on the cross for us and is surrendered to honoring God with 100% of their resources as a result. (Colossians 1:15-18, 22-23)



A Lifetime Giver is someone who is thinking about the longer tale of generosity rather than just the shorter term of month-to-month generosity or even year-to-year. (1 Timothy 6:6-19)

Your Place in the Journey

Take a moment to read through the Generosity Journey again and look up the corresponding scripture with each step.

Mark on the options below where you are on the journey right now.

- Initial Consistent Intentional Sacrificial Lifetime

Where is God calling you to be on the journey in the next few years?

- Initial Consistent Intentional Sacrificial Lifetime

What is needed for you to take the next step on the journey towards a more generous lifestyle? Write your response and prayer in the area below, and then make a note to read your response again in November 2024.



Believe

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,*

*born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;*

*the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and
sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty;*

from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,*

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.



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